

We Are Jewish Faces

written by
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What does community look like?

Count the Stars

In the Torah (the first five books of the Bible), God says to Abraham, “Look to the heavens and count the stars, if you are able to number them. So shall your descendants be” (Genesis 14:5). None of us know what Abraham’s face looked like, but according to Jewish tradition, every Jew is part of his family, whether by birth or by choice. Converts to Judaism are all considered children of Abraham and his wife Sarah, patriarch and matriarch of the Jewish people. To learn more, visit pjlibrary.org/jewishfaces.

Members of the Tribe

We humans have always been tribal, but our tribes have evolved over time. The Jewish “tribe” is large and increasingly diverse in background, custom, practice, and ideology. Some Jews are very observant, and others are completely secular. Some come from a long line of Jewish ancestors; others are Jews by choice. And an interesting thing about the Torah, which tells the Jewish story, is that it is open to interpretation—the Jewish community brings its diversity of thought and spirit to the text. That’s why it’s said that “the Torah has seventy faces”—just like we do (more, even!). Regardless of anyone’s particular story, every Jew contributes to the larger Jewish story.

Face to Face, Heart to Heart

The Hebrew word for “face” is *panim*, and for “inside” is *p’nim*. Why? Our face reveals what’s inside us, our feelings and moods, our personality. Human facial expressions are universal; around the world, people’s faces reveal sadness, joy, and fear in much the same way. We read each other’s expressions carefully to understand each other and gain intimacy. When God addressed Moses after the Israelites left Egypt, the Torah describes their closeness: “The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one would speak to a companion” (Exodus 33:11). We connect to one another best when we face each other and communicate from our hearts.

TALK IT OVER WITH YOUR KIDS

- C**an you name the parts of your face? Point to each part as you name it.
- D**o the kids in this book look happy or sad? What makes you think that?
- W**hich Jewish objects and actions can you find in this book?



HANDS ON!

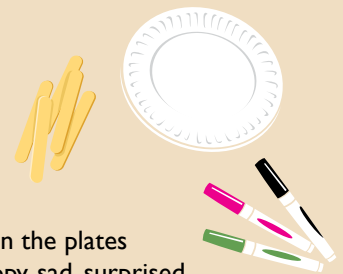
Play the Face Game



Babies and toddlers are fascinated by faces—and they learn important social and emotional skills by studying them closely. Help kids along with a set of faces that run the spectrum of human emotions.

Supplies

Paper plates
Crayons/markers
Craft sticks
Glue



Draw simple faces on the plates and label them—happy, sad, surprised, angry, and so on. Affix the craft sticks to the back.

Now play the Face Game. Ask your kids if they can show you what they look like when they feel happy, for example, and pick up the appropriate plate and hold it up to their faces. Talk about whether any of the faces in the book match the faces on the plates. Can they guess why the children are making those faces?